

# HAMPTON VA

## NEWS RELEASE

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## Panel backs change for School Board elections

**Sept. 12, 2013** - The current method for electing Hampton School Board members could be improved, City Council was told Wednesday afternoon. Members of a panel appointed to study the issue said they favor an at-large election, much like the way City Council is elected.

Panel members Art Wayne, Jill Davis and Pam Croom spoke for the group. They said they looked at close to a dozen different ways for School Board elections, including: two, four, six or seven districts; election only by those who live in the district or by all voters; at-large elections; and some combination of elected and appointed members.

They said the ideal method of selecting the School Board would meet all of the following criteria: be easy to understand; offer maximum accountability; reflect population and diversity; attract a large pool of candidates; offer geographic diversity; and encourage broad participation.

They also identified weaknesses with the current method, with voters in the two districts electing their representatives. Panel members gave it low marks in the categories of being understandable, diversity, accountability and participation. They said it was “not the strongest school governance model for Hampton.”

Two methods rose to the top. One would create seven districts but allow voting citywide. That measure scored high in geographic diversity but was harder to understand. The “council model” scored lower in guaranteeing geographic diversity but offered access to a large pool of candidates and was considered easy to understand.

In the end, the group reached consensus that “at-large elections have proven to reflect the population and diversity of the community.” They suggested, however, that the chair be selected by Board members rather than directly elected by voters.

The report goes to Council, which will decide whether to act on the recommendation.

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